

A
FLEETWAY
LIBRARY

**WAR
PICTURE
LIBRARY**
No 32
1/-

CONVOY



**ALSO ON SALE NOW
FOR WAR THRILLS...ACTION... DRAMA...**

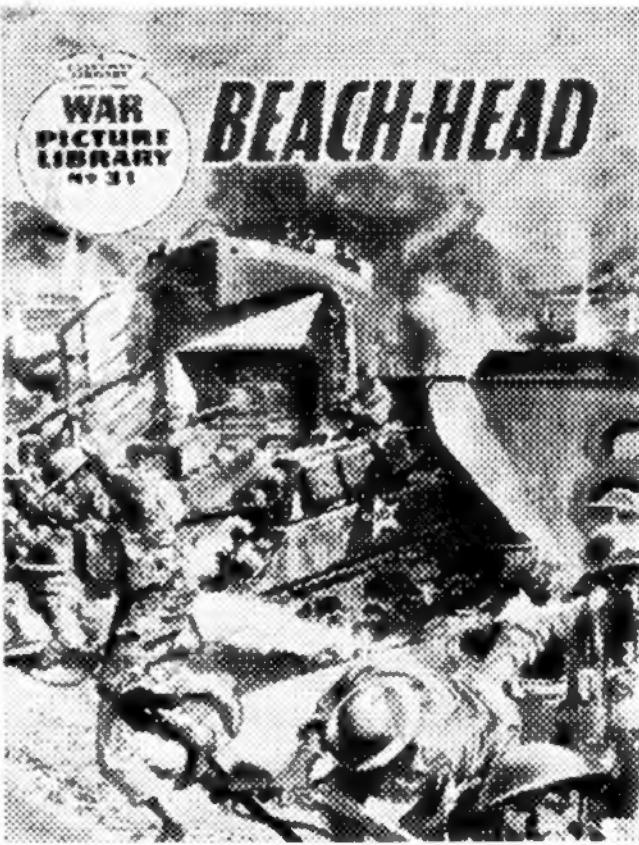
WAR PICTURE LIBRARY

No. 30—SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

No. 31—BEACH-HEAD



A young soldier, the sole survivor of a last ditch stand in Greece, takes another's identity and his fight to win back his honour and his name nearly costs him his life.



This is the story of one of the men who scouted the invasion beaches at Salerno and of his bid to snatch his captured comrades from the hands of the ruthless enemy.

Next month's **THREE** thrilling **WAR PICTURE LIBRARY** titles are :—

- No. 33—UNDER FIRE**
- No. 34—FIX BAYONETS**
- No. 35—FULL STEAM**

CONVOY



AT DAWN ON JUNE 22nd 1941, THE STEEL - GREY LEGIONS OF NAZI GERMANY SMASHED ACROSS THE FRONTIERS OF SOVIET RUSSIA. BEHIND THE MARCHING MEN LAY A EUROPE PROSTRATE BENEATH THE JACKBOOT'S HEEL. ONLY BRITAIN'S SMALL BELEAGUERED ISLANDS REMAINED UNWILLING TO BOW TO NAZI MIGHT. IN A WEEK, THE RUSSIAN ARMIES WERE IN FULL RETREAT. IN A MONTH, THEY WERE REELING. BY THE END OF OCTOBER, THEIR POSITION WAS DESPERATE.

Chapter 1. THE WOLF PACK

... HOW WERE RUSSIA'S MILLIONS TO BE ARMED ? WHERE WERE THE MUNITIONS OF WAR TO COME FROM — THE TANKS, THE SHELLS, THE HEAVY GUNS, THE PETROL, THE 'PLANES — WHICH ALONE COULD STEM THE NAZI TIDE ?



THE ANSWER COULD ONLY BE — FROM BRITAIN. AND SO, AS THE IRON GRIP OF WINTER CLAMPED DOWN UPON THE NORTHERN SEAS, THE FIRST BRITISH CONVOYS SET SAIL. THEY SAILED INTO AN UNBELIEVABLE HELL OF ARCTIC STORMS, OF DEADLY ICE, AND OF KILLING, SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURES —



THE ICE, THE BITTER WIND, AND THE SEA WERE DEADLY ENEMIES — BUT NOT THE ONLY ONES THE CONVOYS HAD TO FACE. THE CLOUD-WRACKED, LEADEN SKIES HID GERMAN AIRCRAFT, AND, BENEATH THE SEA, LURKED GERMAN U-BOATS, SWORN TO PREVENT THE PASSAGE OF SUPPLIES TO RUSSIA.



Convo



JA, HERR
LEUTNANT?



TEN HOURS LATER, THE FIRST GREY LIGHT OF AN ARCTIC DAWN CRESTED ACROSS THE BLEAK AND TURBULENT SEA AND GLEAMED DULLY ON THE DARK SINISTER SHAPES OF THE U-BOAT PACK GATHERED IN THE CONVOY'S PATH.

SEHR GUT! ALL HERE AND ALL IMPATIENT TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ENEMY! HERR LEUTNANT—DO ALL KNOW THE CALEDONIA IS TO BE SPARED?

JA, HERR KAPITAN!

THEN MAKE THE SIGNAL FOR THE ATTACK TO COMMENCE!

LIKE TWELVE STEEL SHARKS THE U-BOATS SLID BELOW THE SURFACE—EACH LADEN WITH DEATH-DEALING TORPEDOES, SOON TO BE AIMED AT THE HEART OF THE BRITISH CONVOY!



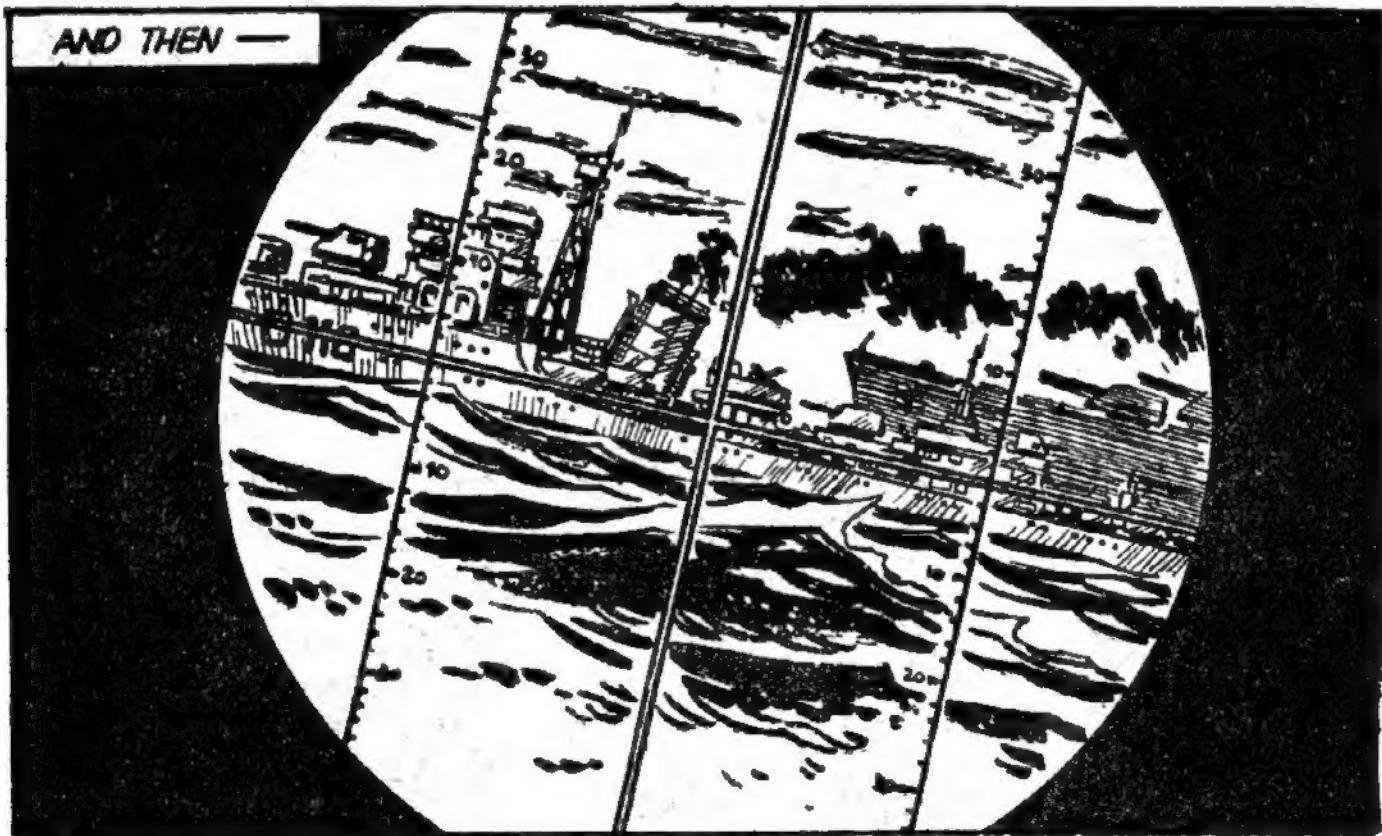
6 Convoy

MEANWHILE, LITTLE MORE THAN TWO MILES AWAY, REAR ADMIRAL WILSON, THE FLAG OFFICER COMMANDING THE BRITISH CONVOY'S ESCORT FLOTILLA, STOOD ON THE BRIDGE OF THE CRUISER CALEDONIA AND SCANNED THE WATER AROUND HIM.

BETTER THAN I EXPECTED, CAPTAIN. THE MERCHANTMEN HAVE ALL KEPT TOGETHER PRETTY WELL DURING THE NIGHT. SEEKS QUIET ENOUGH, TOO....

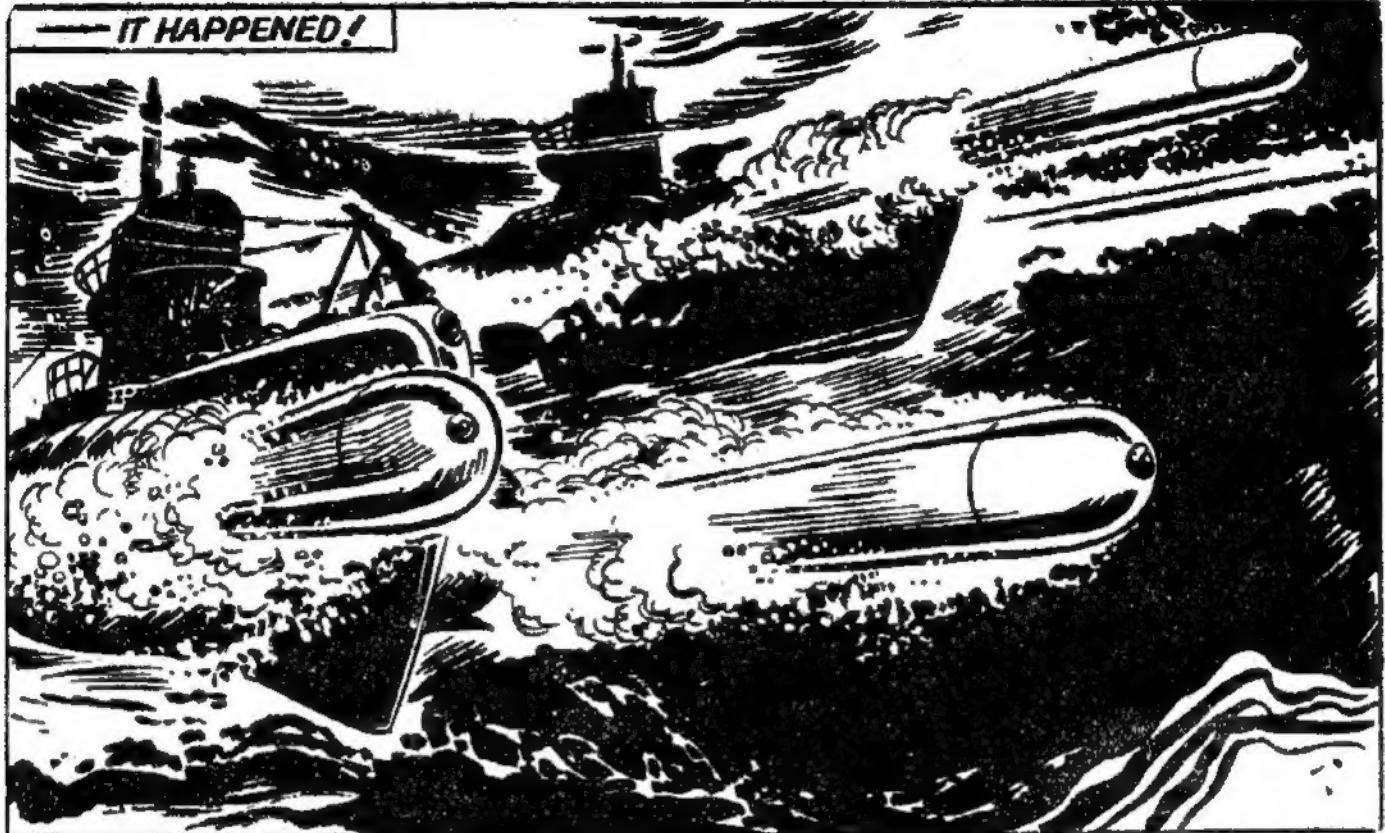


AND THEN —



Convoy

— IT HAPPENED !



WITH AN EAR-SHATTERING ROAR, THE DESTROYER HARVEST, STEAMING ABREAST OF THE CALEDONIA, VANISHED IN SUDDEN SMOKE AND FLAME !

TORPEDOED,
BY HEAVEN !

THE TANKER
CLEO HAS BEEN
HIT, TOO,
SIR !

FULL AHEAD
ALL ! PORT FIFTEEN !
EMERGENCY
SPEED !



Convoy

CALEDONIA LEAPED FORWARD LIKE A SHELL OUT OF ONE OF HER OWN HEAVY GUNS. SHE CAME ROUND IN A GREAT HEELING, SKIDDING TURN, THREE SETS OF ALDIS LAMPS ALREADY STUTTERING OUT THE "MAINTAIN POSITION" TO THE MERCHANTMEN IN CONVOY. THE CRUISER KNIFED THROUGH THE WATER, BOILING FOAM PILED HIGH AT ITS BOWS, HEADING FOR THE ESTIMATED POSITION OF THE U-BOAT WHICH HAD DISEMBOWELLED HARVEST.

ASDIC CONTACT
GREEN SEVENTY—
CLOSING. VERY CLOSE
NOW. VERY CLOSE.

DEPTH
CHARGES
READY,
SIR!

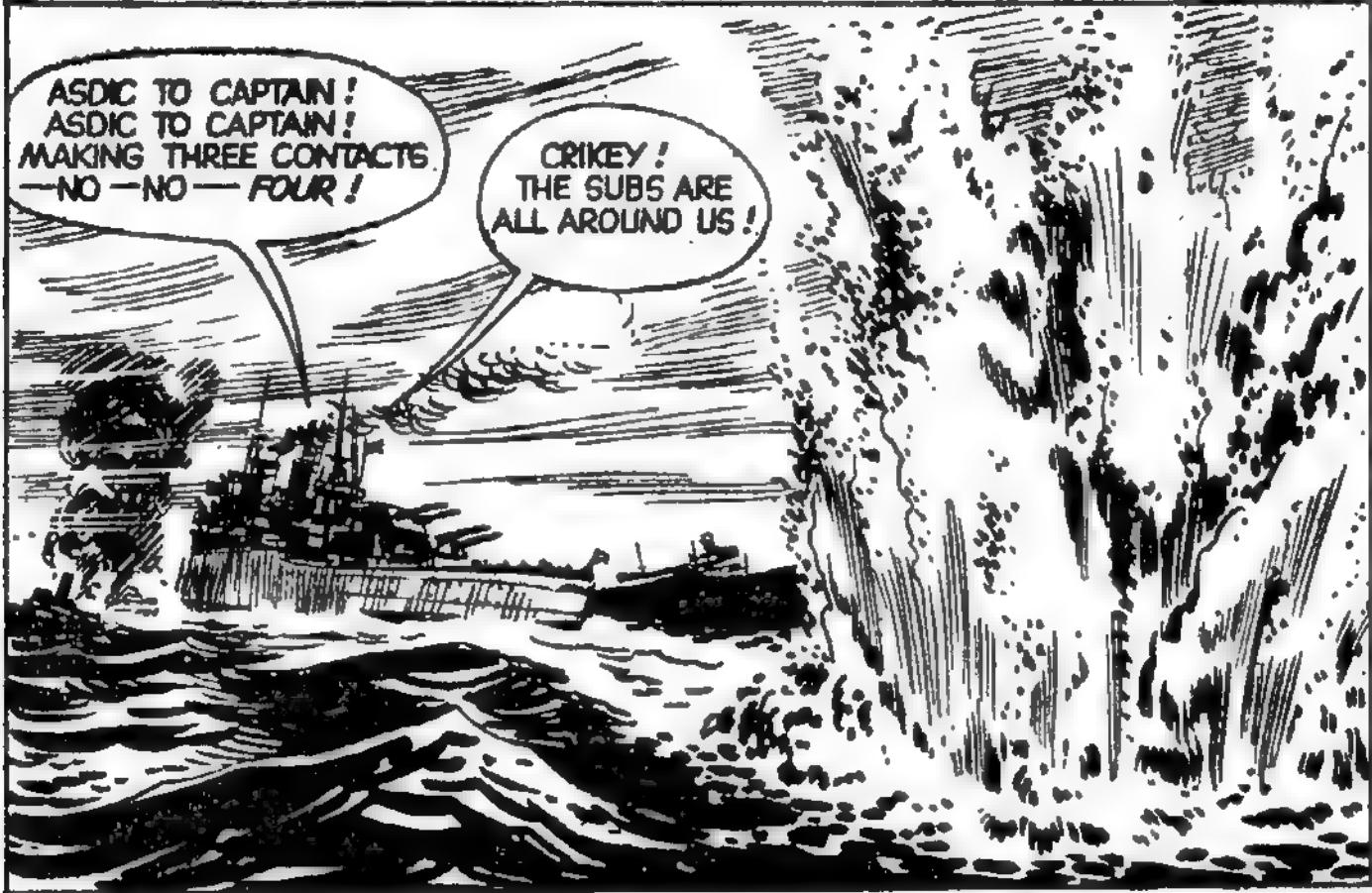


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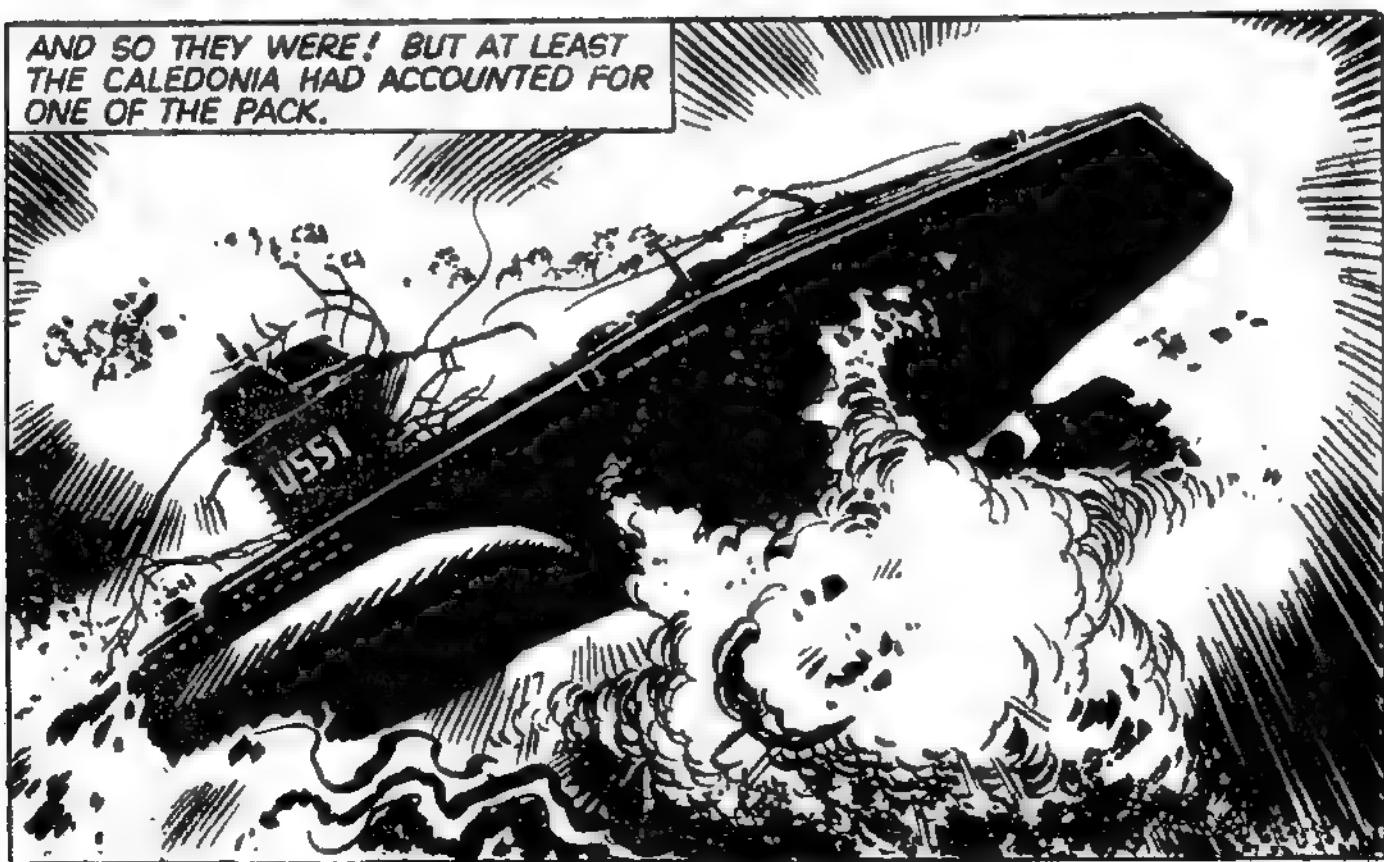
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DEADLY BLACK DEPTH CHARGES WERE FLUNG HIGH IN THE AIR BEYOND THE CALEDONIA'S STERN. THERE FOLLOWED A MOMENT IN WHICH ALL TIME STOOD STILL AND THEN, WITH A DEAFENING ROAR, THE SEA Erupted SKYWARDS.



AND SO THEY WERE! BUT AT LEAST THE CALEDONIA HAD ACCOUNTED FOR ONE OF THE PACK.



TOTALLY OUT OF CONTROL, THE U-BOAT SHOT TO THE SURFACE. FOR A LONG SECOND IT HUNG POISED, STANDING ALMOST ON END. AND THEN CAME A TERRIBLE INTERNAL EXPLOSION.

WE GOT IT!
WE GOT A
U-BOAT!

THAT'S ONE OF THE
DEVILS! NOW LET'S GET
THE REST!



BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE.. FOR AS THE U-BOAT BROKE IN HALF WITH A RENDING, GRINDING ROAR AND PLUNGED DOWNWARDS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN, THE REST OF THE WOLF PACK STRUCK!



IN THE NEXT FOUR SECONDS, TWICE THAT NUMBER OF TORPEDOES FOUND THEIR MARK IN THE HULLS OF MERCHANTMEN! THE SEA WAS LITTERED WITH BURNING SHIPS. YET ANOTHER OIL TANKER WAS HIT AND BLAZING PETROL SWEPT FORWARD —A WALL OF FLAME, THREATENING TO ENGULF THE SURVIVORS OF THE TORPEDOED VESSELS WHO STRUGGLED IN THE WATER.

PERMISSION TO HEAVE TO AND PICK UP SURVIVORS, SIR?

IF WE ARE STOPPED FOR JUST ONE SECOND YOU KNOW WHAT COULD HAPPEN TO US!

I CAN'T LEAVE THOSE MEN TO BURN TO DEATH OUT THERE, SIR! IF THE FLAMES DON'T GET 'EM, THE COLD WILL!

FOR A VERY LONG MOMENT THE REAR-ADmiral said nothing—and all the time he could hear the cries of the men trapped by the wall of flame and burning in the water. Abruptly he nodded.

ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN CARFAX! GO AND GET 'EM! BUT—FOR PITY'S SAKE—BE QUICK!

AYE AYE, SIR!

CALEDONIA MADE A SWEEPING, SLIDING TURN AND CAME IN TOWARDS THE MEN IN THE WATER. HER SPEED DROPPED. FIFTEEN KNOTS — TEN — FIVE —

STOP ALL ENGINES!

JUMP TO IT, LADS! MAN THE NETS! GET THOSE SURVIVORS INBOARD!



FROM BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE WAVES, U-BOAT OFFICERS EYED THE SCENE WITH SAVAGE SATISFACTION TOUCHED WITH NOT A LITTLE REGRET.

WHAT A SIGHT! AND WHAT A TARGET, HERR KAPITAN! DONNERWETTER! WHAT I'D GIVE TO PLANT TWO TIN FISH INTO THE SIDE OF THAT CRUISER! BUT — ORDERS ARE ORDERS !

SAVE YOUR REGRETS, HERR LEUTNANT! LOOK AT THE MAILING WE'VE GIVEN THIS CONVOY ALREADY — AND THERE ARE OTHER TARGETS JUST AS GOOD AS THE CRUISER. THE BRITISH WILL BE LUCKY IF THEY GET FOUR MERCHANT SHIPS TO MURMANSK OUT OF THE FORTY !



THE BRITISH WERE LUCKY. DURING THE REST OF THAT DREADFUL DAY THE WEATHER GOT STEADILY WORSE, SO THAT, IN LATE AFTERNOON THE U-BOAT PACK HAD TO TAKE REFUGE IN DEEP WATER TO ESCAPE THE STORM RAGING ON THE SURFACE, AND A BADLY BATTERED CONVOY WAS ABLE TO LIMP TO MURMANSK HARBOUR TWO DAYS LATER.

THE POOR OLD ESCORTS AIN'T BEEN SO LUCKY, EH, NOBBY? TWO CRUISERS AND SIX DESTROYERS WE HAD WHEN WE LEFT THE SHETLANDS, AND LOOK WHAT WE'VE GOT NOW!

JERRY GAVE US A PROPER PASTING AND NO MISTAKE!



THOSE U-BOATS SEEMED TO BE WAITING FOR US! AND VISIBILITY WAS SO BAD ON THOSE TWO DAYS BEFORE THE ATTACK THAT YOU COULDN'T SEE YOUR HAND IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE HALF THE TIME! SO HOW DID JERRY KNOW WHERE TO FIND US? TELL ME THAT!



Convoys

THE SAME QUESTION WAS WORRYING REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON, AND, AFTER HE HAD MADE HIS REPORT, IT DEEPLY DISTURBED THE ADMIRALTY IN LONDON. WITHIN HOURS, A SMALL, THIN, GREY-HAIRED OLD MAN HAD BEEN CALLED FOR A CONSULTATION. THE MAN'S NAME WAS RAVEN. HIS BUSINESS WAS COUNTER-ESPIONAGE.

WILSON SAYS THAT AT NO TIME WERE ANY ENEMY AIRCRAFT OR SHIPS SIGHTED BEFORE THE ATTACK, AND YET IT'S QUITE PLAIN THAT THE GERMANS KNEW WHERE THAT CONVOY WAS AND HAD TIME TO PREPARE A HOT RECEPTION FOR IT!

SO THE NAZIS HAD SOME OTHER SOURCE OF INFORMATION, EH? THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR MY DEPARTMENT.



BACK IN HIS OWN OFFICE, RAVEN DROPPED THE REPORT ON HIS DESK AND SPOKE QUIETLY INTO AN INTERNAL TELEPHONE.

SEND FOR JAMES STAFFORD!



Chapter 2. WHO IS THE TRAITOR ?

JAMES STAFFORD WAS ONE OF THE RAVEN'S SECRET AGENTS. IN THE OPINION OF SOME PEOPLE HE WAS THE BEST OF RAVEN'S AGENTS. CAREFULLY AND QUIETLY, RAVEN TOOK HIM THROUGH THE STORY OF REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON'S ILL-FATED CONVOY TO MURMANSK:

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED, STAFFORD. AND IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORSE — MUCH WORSE — IF, FOR ONCE, THE WEATHER HADN'T BEEN ON OUR SIDE.

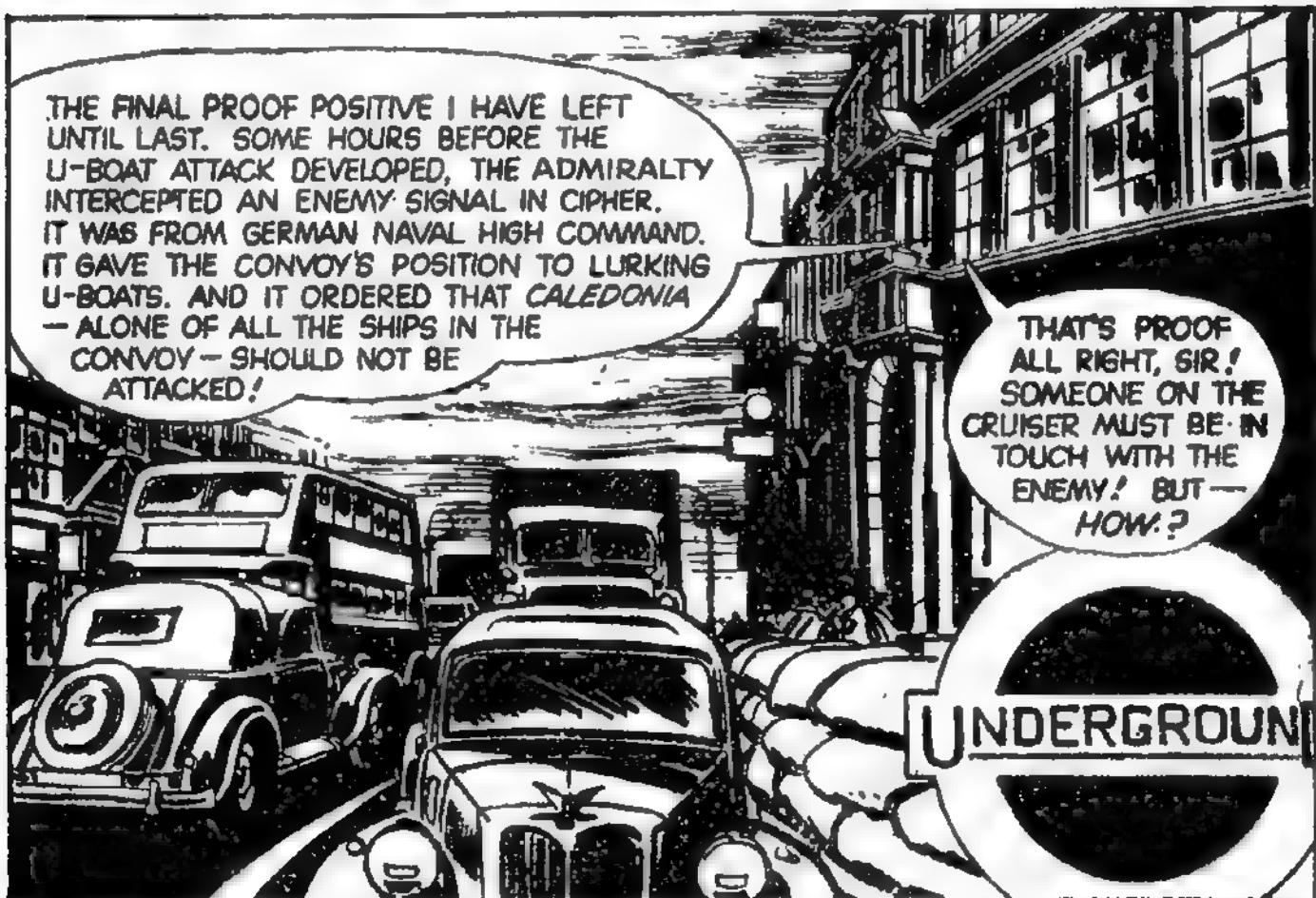
—THE WHOLE CONVOY MIGHT HAVE BEEN WIPE OUT. YES, SIR, I SEE THAT —



RAVEN SHOOK HIS HEAD.

NOT THE WHOLE CONVOY. AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES OUR JOB A LITTLE EASIER. WAITING FOR YOU, I'VE HAD TIME TO DO A LITTLE RESEARCH. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT CONVOYS LED BY CALEDONIA HAVE RUN INTO WOLF PACKS THAT SEEMED TO BE EXPECTING THEM —





ANY LIGHT SHOWN IN A CONVOY WOULD BE POUNCED ON, SO SIGNAL LAMPS CAN BE RULED OUT, STAFFORD. AND SO CAN COMMUNICATION BY RADIO. THROUGHOUT THE VOYAGE TO MURMANSK A STRICT LISTENING WATCH WAS MAINTAINED OVER ALL WAVEBANDS.

THEN — HOW — ?



THAT, I'M GLAD TO SAY, IS YOUR PROBLEM, STAFFORD. I WANT TO KNOW WHO THE TRAITOR IS ABOARD THE CALEDONIA. THAT'S WHY, AFTER AN INTENSIVE COURSE IN NAVAL MATTERS WHICH BEGINS TOMORROW, YOU'LL BE COMMISSIONED TO JOIN THE CREW. I'LL WISH YOU LUCK !

I THINK I'M GOING TO NEED IT!



THE NEXT FEW DAYS PASSED ALL TOO QUICKLY FOR THE BRITISH COUNTER-ESPIONAGE AGENT. POSTED TO THE ROYAL NAVAL TRAINING SHIP, KING ALFRED, HE SOON LEARNED THAT THE SENIOR SERVICE HAD ITS OWN DISTINCTIVE WAY OF DOING EVERYTHING.

NAW! NAW! IT'LL NEVER DO! LUMME! DO YOU WANT TO BE TAKEN FOR A BLOOMIN' PONGO? A BIT MORE CASUAL LIKE, IF YOU PLEASE, WITH THAT THERE FLIPPER! AND AIM FOR THE PEAK OF YOUR CAP! DON'T TRY TO TAKE YOUR PERISHIN' EAR ORF!



IN JIM STAFFORD'S OPINION, HIS TRAINING — HURRIED AS IT HAD TO BE — LEFT A LOT TO BE DESIRED. HE KNEW TOO LITTLE ABOUT THE WORKINGS OF THE ROYAL NAVY AT THE END OF IT, AND COULD ONLY HOPE THAT WHAT LITTLE HE DID KNOW WOULD NOT BE TOO SEVERELY TESTED.

THERE SHE IS, SIR! THAT'S THE CALEDONIA!

I ONLY HOPE I CAN GET WISE TO THE TRAITOR ABOARD HER BEFORE THESE REAL SAILORS GET WISE TO ME!



JIM CUMBED THE GANGWAY AND SALUTED AS HE REACHED THE DECK.

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER
JAMES STAFFORD,
REPORTING FOR DUTY.

WELCOME ABOARD,
COMMANDER. I'LL HAVE
YOU SHOWN TO YOUR
CABIN. THE ADMIRAL'S
ASHORE AT THE MOMENT,
SO YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT
TO REPORT TO HIM.

JIM DECIDED THE SOONER HE STARTED GETTING TO KNOW THE OTHER OFFICERS
AND MEN ABOARD THE CALEDONIA THE QUICKER HIS WORK WOULD BE DONE.

THANKS FOR THE WELCOME,
COMMANDER. HUH! ISN'T
IT SILLY — WE'RE THE
SAME RANK AND WE'RE
'COMMANDER-ING' EACH
OTHER ALL THE TIME.
MY NAME'S JIM.

AND MINE IS
LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER
SEWELL — R.N. THE
RATING HAS GOT YOUR
GEAR. HE'LL SEE
YOU BELOW.



THE NEXT THIRTY-FIVE MINUTES OF JIM'S TIME WERE TAKEN UP WITH MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS STEWARD AND GETTING HIS KIT STOWED IN HIS QUARTERS. THEN HE WENT FORWARD, TO THE WARDROOM.

AH, THE LATEST ADDITION TO OUR HAPPY COMPANY! ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU, SIR, TO LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER STAFFORD — JIM TO HIS FRIENDS!



CAPTAIN CARFAX APPEARED NOT TO NOTICE THE SOUR NOTE IN THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S VOICE....

I'M GLAD TO MEET YOU, COMMANDER, YOU'RE POSTED TO THE ADMIRAL'S PERSONAL STAFF ?

THAT'S RIGHT, SIR !

YOU MUST GET TO KNOW THE REST OF THE WARDROOM. COMMANDER FLAHERTY !

SIR — ?

'GET TO KNOW THE REST OF THE WARDROOM' THE CAPTAIN HAD SAID. JIM STAFFORD KNEW QUITE A LOT ABOUT THE WARDROOM AND ITS OCCUPANTS ALREADY ! HE HAD FELT THE TENSION IN THE AIR — A TIGHT, ELECTRIC FEELING. THE CALEDONIA'S OFFICERS WERE DEFINITELY NOT A BAND OF BROTHERS ! IN FACT FROM ALL JIM STAFFORD HAD HEARD, HE DOUBTED IF THEY WERE EVEN FIGHTING THE SAME WAR ! THEY WERE FIGHTING EACH OTHER — NOT THE GERMANS ! THERE WAS SOMETHING VERY WRONG HERE IN THE WARDROOM OF THE CALEDONIA !

INTRODUCE STAFFORD ALL ROUND, FLAHERTY. COMMANDER FLAHERTY IS OUR SHIP'S SURGEON, MISTER STAFFORD.

GLAD TO KNOW YOU, COMMANDER.

SURGEON — COMMANDER, IF YOU PLEASE, YOUNG MAN ! BUT JUST CALL ME 'DOC' — EVERYBODY DOES ! STEWARD — I'M PRESCRIBING A WHISKY FOR MISTER STAFFORD, IRISH — OF COURSE !











THE NEXT FEW MINUTES LEFT JIM WITH A CONFUSED IMPRESSION OF A SEA OF FACES.

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER DRAKE, GUNNERY OFFICER, AND STOKES, OUR SPARKS -

GLAD TO KNOW YOU.



HE'S THE HERO OF OUR LAST CONVOY, AND THIS IS SURGEON-LIEUTENANT SMART. I'M MAWSON - RADAR -

I'M CARVER - DEPTH CHARGES.



Convoy

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SEWELL HAD COME UP BEHIND THE OTHER OFFICERS. NOW HE INTERRUPTED BITINGLY.

MISTER MAWSON IS THE MAN WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO WARN US WE WERE RUNNING INTO A U-BOAT PACK ON OUR LAST CONVOY—AND DIDN'T!

WHY—
YOU—!

GENTLEMEN!
PLEASE!



LIEUTENANT MAWSON BRUSHED AWAY COMMANDER FLAHERTY'S RESTRAINING HAND. HIS EYES WERE HOT WITH ANGER.

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER MEANS BY THAT REMARK. U-BOATS DON'T SHOW ON RADAR UNLESS THEY'RE SURFACED.

THEY GENERALLY DO SURFACE BEFORE AN ATTACK. EVEN THE HUMBLEST RATING KNOWS THAT, MISTER MAWSON! EVEN THE HUMBLEST RATING KNOWS THE EXTENT OF YOUR FAILURE TO WARN US!



AN ANGRY RETORT ROSE TO THE YOUNG RADAR OFFICER'S LIPS, BUT IT WAS THEN THAT LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER DRAKE, THE GUNNERY OFFICER, INTERVENED.

AND THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW, COMMANDER. RADAR IS STILL IN ITS INFANCY. UNDER ARCTIC CONDITIONS THERE ARE TIMES WHEN IT DOESN'T WORK VERY WELL. MAWSON CAN'T BE BLAMED FOR THAT.

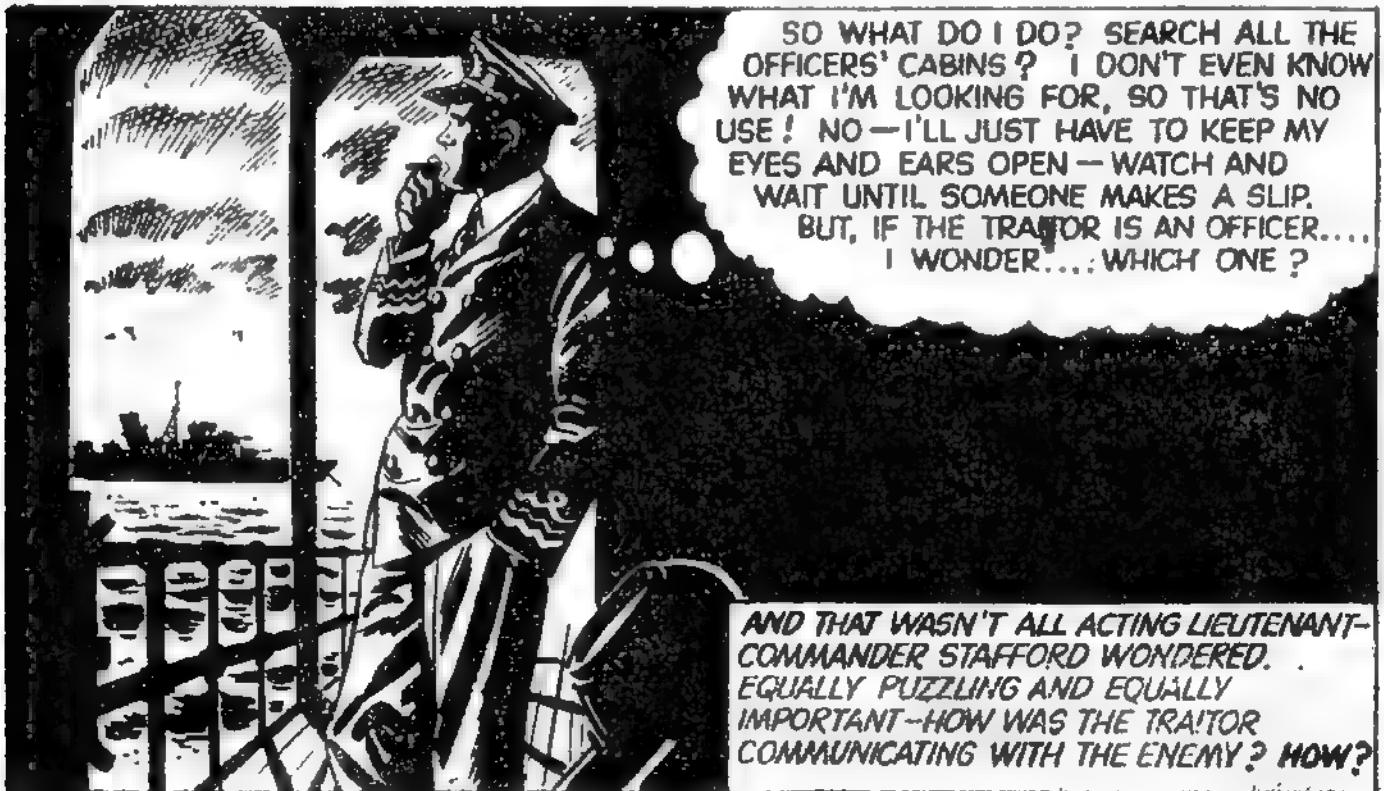


DURING THE NEXT HOUR, JIM STAFFORD TOURED THE CRUISER. HE WENT EVERYWHERE AND TALKED TO ALL THE RATINGS HE COULD. HE BECAME CONVINCED THAT THE TRAITOR HE WAS SEEKING WAS PROBABLY AN OFFICER AN OFFICER HE HAD ALREADY MET!

ONLY AN OFFICER WOULD HAVE THE DEGREE OF PRIVACY ESSENTIAL TO A MAN PLAYING A DOUBLE GAME. THE RATINGS ATE, LIVED AND SLEPT CROWDED TOGETHER ON MESSDECKS. WHAT SECRETS COULD THEY KEEP FROM EACH OTHER?

SO WHAT DO I DO? SEARCH ALL THE OFFICERS' CABINS? I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR, SO THAT'S NO USE! NO—I'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP MY EYES AND EARS OPEN—WATCH AND WAIT UNTIL SOMEONE MAKES A SLIP. BUT, IF THE TRAITOR IS AN OFFICER.... I WONDER... WHICH ONE?

AND THAT WASN'T ALL ACTING LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER STAFFORD WONDERED. EQUALY PUZZLING AND EQUALY IMPORTANT—HOW WAS THE TRAITOR COMMUNICATING WITH THE ENEMY? HOW?

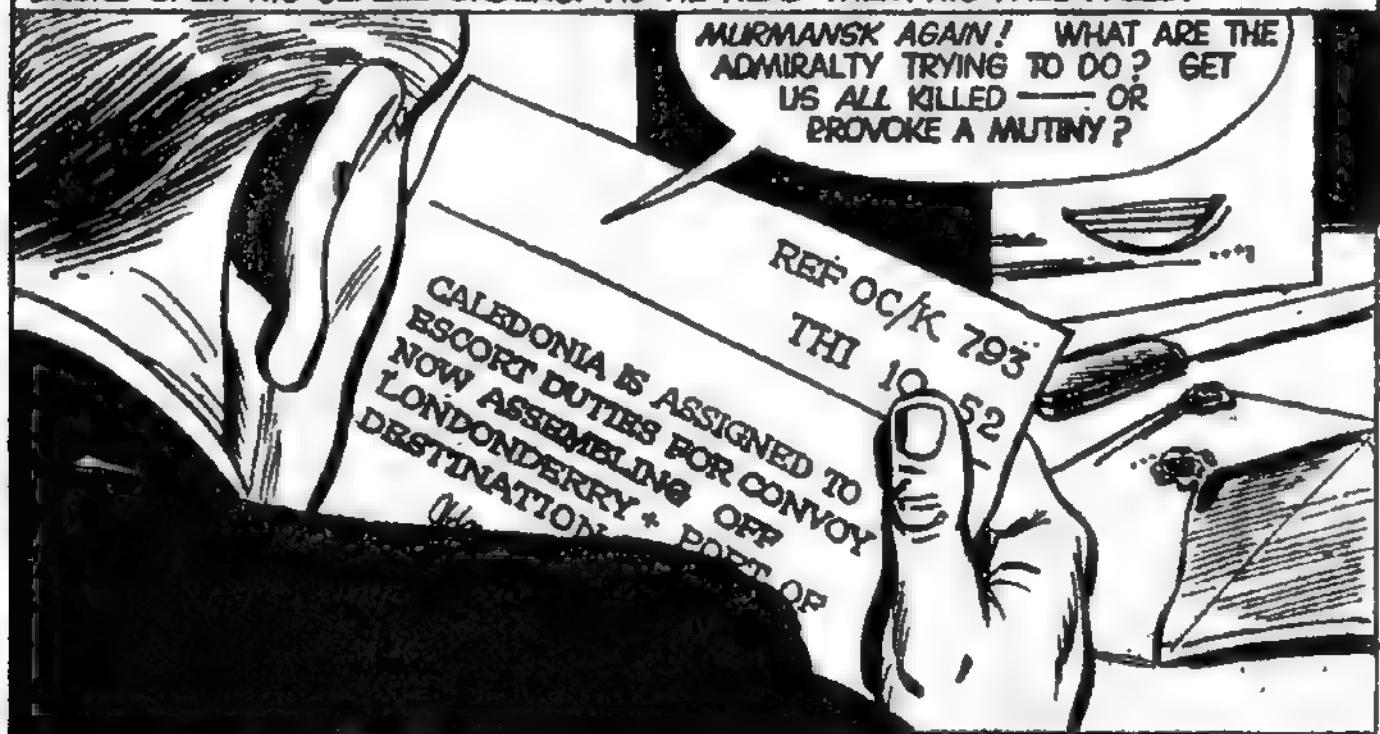


Chapter 3. MURMANSK RUN

THE CALEDONIA WENT TO WAR AGAIN ON THE EVENING TIDE. AS DUSK FELL SHE SLID DOWN THE FIRTH OF CLYDE TOWARDS THE SEA: SHE WAS ALONE..



WHERE WAS THE CALEDONIA BOUND? IN HIS CABIN, REAR-ADmirAL WILSON BROKE OPEN HIS SEALED ORDERS. AS HE READ THEM HIS FACE PALED.



WITH A HAND THAT TREMBLED SLIGHTLY, REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON REACHED FOR THE SHIP'S TELEPHONE.

SEND LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER STAFFORD TO MY CABIN AT ONCE, AND HAVE ALL THE OTHER OFFICERS ASSEMBLE IN THE WARDROOM. I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY TO THEM.



WHEN JIM STAFFORD REACHED THE REAR-ADMIRAL'S CABIN HE FOUND THE SENIOR OFFICER IN A GRAVE MOOD.

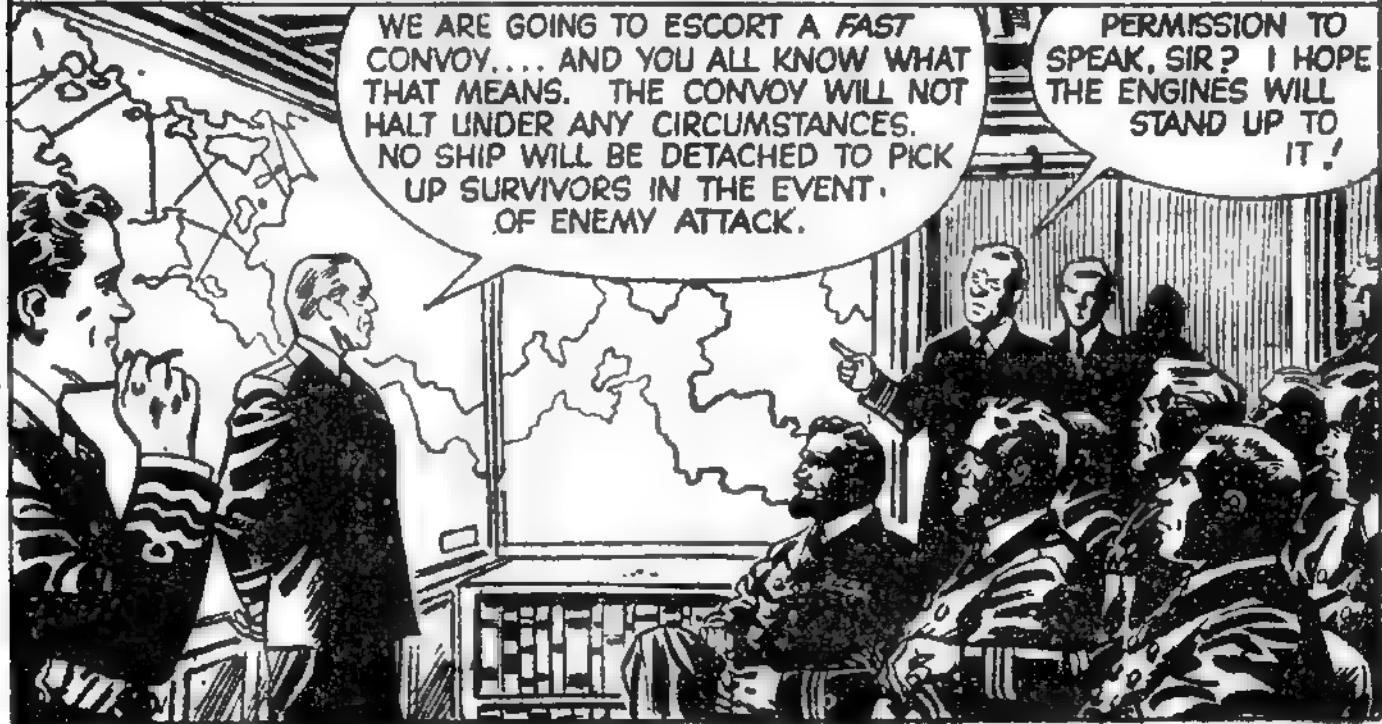
IT'S MURMANSK AGAIN, STAFFORD. IT WAS BAD ENOUGH LAST TIME, HEAVEN KNOWS, BUT THE WEATHER SAVED US. WE CAN'T RELY ON THAT AGAIN. I'M AFRAID WE'VE GOT TO RELY ON YOU, STAFFORD. WE'VE ALL GOT TO RELY ON YOU. YOU'VE GOT TO UNMASK THIS TRAITOR AND STOP HIM COMMUNICATING WITH THE ENEMY — OR WE'RE DONE FOR !



ONLY MINUTES LATER, REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON WAS FACING THE CRUISER'S ASSEMBLED OFFICERS IN THE WARDROOM AND HAD TOLD THEM THEIR DESTINATION.

WE ARE GOING TO ESCORT A FAST CONVOY... AND YOU ALL KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS. THE CONVOY WILL NOT HALT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. NO SHIP WILL BE DETACHED TO PICK UP SURVIVORS IN THE EVENT OF ENEMY ATTACK.

PERMISSION TO SPEAK, SIR? I HOPE THE ENGINES WILL STAND UP TO IT!



Convoy

REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON WENT ON TO DEAL IN DETAIL WITH THE ORDERS HE HAD RECEIVED FROM THE ADMIRALTY. BUT JIM STAFFORD, LOOKING INTO THE FACES OF THE OFFICERS IN FRONT OF HIM, DOUBTED IF ANY ONE OF THEM WAS REALLY LISTENING TO THE ESCORT FLOTILLA'S COMMANDER. EACH MAN WAS BACK IN A NIGHTMARE PAST — HEARING AGAIN THE CRIES OF BURNING COMRADES FLOUNDERING IN THE ICY, ARCTIC WATERS: SEEING AGAIN WHOLE SHIPS REARING SKYWARD IN STABBING LIGHT AND SEARING FLAME AS TORPEDOES STRUCK HOME... THIS TIME THERE WOULD BE NO HOPE OF RESCUE. THIS WAS TO BE A FAST CONVOY — BY ADMIRALTY ORDER. THE RUSSIANS WERE DESPERATELY SHORT OF MUNITIONS OF WAR.

THE CALEDONIA'S OFFICERS HAD NOT RECEIVED THE NEWS ENTHUSIASTICALLY, BUT THEY HAD RECEIVED IT QUIETLY. THE MEN ON THE MESSDECKS, HOWEVER, SPOKE THEIR MIND.

...WE'RE ORDERED TO CONVOY MERCHANTMEN TO MURMANSK AGAIN, AND THIS IS TO BE A NON-STOP TRIP...

A FAST CONVOY! TO CROWN IT ALL! THE MURMANSK RUN ITSELF IS BAD ENOUGH, BUT —

WHAT'S A 'FAST' CONVOY, MATE?

IF YOUR SHIP'S HIT, THEY LEAVE YOU TO DROWN, THAT'S WHAT IT IS!

A MINIMUM SPEED OF FIFTEEN KNOTS WILL BE MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT THE VOYAGE. IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO STOP ANY SHIP FOR ANY REASON...

THEY'RE OUT TO KILL US ALL! IF THE JERRIES DON'T GET US THE FISH WILL!

LLOYD! STEWART! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SEWELL, THE SHIP'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER, STRODE QUICKLY ACROSS THE MESSDECK. JAMES STAFFORD AND A MASSIVE MASTER-AT-ARMS FOLLOWED, A LITTLE MORE SLOWLY.



THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S EYES FLASHED DANGEROUSLY. HIS THIN LIPS TWISTED INTO A GNARL.



Convoy



THE NEXT DAY SAW THE CALEDONIA OFF LONDONDERRY — A DAY OF CONFERENCES AS THE CAPTAINS OF THE ESCORT FLOTILLA AND THE MASTERS OF THE MERCHANT SHIPS CAME ABOARD THE CRUISER TO BE BRIEFED. THEN, ONCE MORE, THE CALEDONIA SAILED. THIS TIME ON THE NON-STOP TRIP INTO THE HELL OF ICE AND THE EVER-PRESENT FEAR WHICH WAS A CONVOY TO MURMANSK...

IT WAS ON THE SECOND DAY OUT FROM LONDONDERRY THAT THEY HEARD THE SOUND OF WHAT COULD ONLY BE NAZI AIRCRAFT ENGINES. THE PLANE CIRCLED THE CONVOY AS, ON THE BRIDGE OF THE CALEDONIA, LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SEWELL, OFFICER OF THE WATCH, VAINLY PEERED THROUGH HIS BINOCULARS.

SEE ANYTHING, MISTER TORRINGTON?

NOT A THING, SIR. BUT THE DEVIL'S UP THERE SOMEWHERE ALL RIGHT. A JERRY RECONNAISSANCE PLANE, I'LL BET! LOOKING FOR US, PROBABLY.



THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S EYES NARROWED. HIS MOUTH TIGHTENED. THREE SWIFT STRIDES TOOK HIM TO THE RADAR SPEAKING TUBE.

LIEUTENANT MAWSON — WHAT THE DEVIL ARE YOU DOING DOWN THERE! IS EVERYONE IN THE RADAR ROOM ASLEEP? FOR YOUR INFORMATION THERE'S A GERMAN AIRCRAFT FLYING AROUND UP HERE! I'M TELLING YOU — AND YOU SHOULD BE TELLING ME!







Convoy

HE'S STILL UP THERE, SIR.
BUT I STILL CAN'T SEE HIM.
COMING LOWER,
I THINK.

DAMMIT, MAWSON! THE SAFETY OF
THE ENTIRE CONVOY MIGHT DEPEND
ON YOU! GIVE ME A BEARING, MAN!
YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE ME
A BEARING!



IN THE RADAR ROOM, LIEUTENANT MAWSON HEARD THE HARD, ANGRY NOTE IN THE REAR-ADMIRAL'S VOICE. HE, TOO, FELT ANGRY IN HIS TURN. DID THE ADMIRAL SUSPECT HIM OF WORKING FOR THE GERMANS OR SOMETHING? IT WASN'T HIS FAULT THAT THE RADAR SETS WEREN'T FUNCTIONING PROPERLY...

I'M WAITING,
MAWSON! WE'RE
ALL WAITING! GIVE
ME A BEARING!

YOU HEARD THE ADMIRAL! YOU KNOW
HOW INACCURATE THESE BEARINGS ARE.
BUT REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON MUST
HAVE THEM, SO GIVE THEM
TO HIM!



IN THE MAIN DIRECTOR TOWER, LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER DRAKE, THE GUNNERY OFFICER, GRABBED THE PHONE AS SOON AS THE BELL BEGAN TO RING.



IF THE CRUISER OPENED FIRE ON THE NAZI PLANE THE FIRST SHELLS FROM HER GUNS MUST STRIKE THE TARGET, OR ALL WAS LOST. WOULD THE RADAR BEARINGS BE ACCURATE OR NOT? COULD DRAKE AFFORD TO TAKE A CHANCE?





THE CALEDONIA SHIVERED. THE GUNS, TRACKING THE PLOT DRAKE HIMSELF HAD GIVEN THEM, BELCHED SMOKE AND FLAME. SHELLS TORE HOLES IN THE LOW-LYING CLOUD. MULTIPLE POM-POMS STUTTERED A CHANT OF DEATH. AND THEN...

WE'VE
DONE IT!
WE GOT
HIM!

HIT IT, BY
HEAVENS! IT'LL
COME DOWN IN
THE SEA!



THE RATING WAS
WRONG! LIKE A STONE
THE NAZI AIRCRAFT FELL,
AND THE WAVES CAME
UP TO MEET IT. BUT,
AT THE CONTROLS,
BURNING AND CRYING
OUT WITH PAIN, HIS
CREW DEAD AROUND
HIM, THE GERMAN PILOT
FOUGHT TO KEEP HIS
AIRCRAFT AIRBORNE.
FOUGHT — AND WON!
ITS NOSE LIFTED.
TWENTY FIVE FEET
ABOVE THE SEA IT
LURCHED INTO
HORIZONTAL FLIGHT.



Convoy

43



Convoy





THE REAR-ADMIRAL REACHED THE GUTTED BRIDGE AND LOOKED HARD FROM ONE MAN TO ANOTHER.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

IF COMMANDER DRAKE HAD USED THE BEARINGS RADAR GAVE HIM, HE'D NEVER HAVE DOWNED THAT JERRY! HE WORKED OUT HIS OWN BEARINGS! IF HE HADN'T, WE'D HAVE MISSED BY A MILE!

IS THIS TRUE, DRAKE?

YES, SIR — BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO MAKE A SONG AND DANCE ABOUT IT.

THAT'S JUST LIKE MISTER DRAKE. NEVER TAKES ANY CREDIT! AS FOR THAT RADAR OFFICER — HE MAKES SO MANY MISTAKES I SOMETIMES WONDER IF HE'S FIGHTING FOR US OR THE JERRIES!

JIM STAFFORD HEARD THE PETTY OFFICER'S MUTTERED WORDS — AND FOUND HIMSELF WONDERING THE SAME THING.

Chapter 4. TRAIL OF TREACHERY

DURING THE NEXT FEW HOURS, THE STORY OF HOW DRAKE HAD WORKED OUT HIS OWN BEARINGS TO SHOOT DOWN THE NAZI PLANE SPREAD THROUGH THE SHIP. THE GUNNERY OFFICER WAS HAILED AS A HERO. ONLY ONE DISCORDANT VOICE WAS RAISED AGAINST HIM.



Convoy

IMPULSIVELY, HE STARTED FORWARD.

WHO'S THERE ?
THERE IS
SOMEONE
THERE —



THE NEXT INSTANT, THE SHADOWY FIGURE STRUCK !

AAARGH !



JIM STAFFORD LEAPT FORWARD —

GOT YOU!



BUT JIM STAFFORD SPOKE TOO SOON. AS HE CLOSED IN TO GRAPPLE WITH LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SEWELL'S UNKNOWN ASSAILANT, THE MAN TWISTED LIKE AN EEL. A SPLIT-SECOND LATER HE WAS RACING DOWN THE DECK. JIM STAFFORD COULD NOT CATCH HIM.

WHAT
HAPPENED —?
OH, MY HEAD!

WHOEVER IT
WAS GOT AWAY. I
GRABBED FOR HIM
AND MISSED. BUT —
HULLO! WHAT'S BEEN
GOING ON HERE?



Convoy





Convoy

... PLANES... SEEN FOR MILES... FOLLOWED LIKE A TRAIL...



JIM STAFFORD DID NOT EXPLAIN. THERE WAS NOT TIME. HURRIEDLY HE MADE AN EXAMINATION OF THE OTHER LIFEBOATS. THE DRUMS OF DYE WERE MISSING FROM ALL OF THEM! MINUTES LATER HE WAS MAKING HIS REPORT TO THE REAR ADMIRAL.





Convoy



QUICKLY, JIM STAFFORD EXPLAINED HIS PLAN TO THE REAR-ADMIRAL. MEANWHILE, JUST AS HE HAD PREDICTED, A NAZI PLANE, SOME MILES AWAY, WAS DROPPING FLARES INTO THE SEA.



AND AT NAZI NAVAL HIGH COMMAND AT WILHELMSHAVEN...

ONE OF OUR PATROL AIRCRAFT HAS SIGHTED THE TRAIL LAID BY OUR FRIEND ABOARD THE CALEDONIA. NOW WE KNOW THE POSITION OF THE CONVOY HAVE ALL U-BOATS IN THE AREA ALERTED. THEY STRIKE AT DAWN. THERE'LL BE MANY FAT MERCHANT SHIPS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA BEFORE EITHER OF US IS MUCH OLDER!

HEIL, HITLER!



BUT, ON THE CALEDONIA, JIM STAFFORD WAS NOT LETTING THE HOURS SLIP IDLY BY. AS THE TRAITOR, ALL UNSUSPECTING, CONTINUED TO LAY THE TRAIL THAT POINTED STRAIGHT TO THE HEART OF THE CONVOY, SIGNAL LIGHTS FLASHED FROM THE CALEDONIA'S MASTHEAD.

URGENT
MESSAGE FROM THE
CALEDONIA, SIR! IT MUST
BE IMPORTANT. THEY'RE
SENDING IT IN CODE.





THE RADAR OFFICER WAS SURPRISED, AND WITH GOOD REASON. WHEN HE HAD GONE TO HIS CABIN THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, THE CRUISER AND ITS TEN ESCORTS HAD BEEN GUARDING SEVENTY-SIX MERCHANTMEN. NOW NOT ONE OF THEM WAS IN SIGHT. THE ELEVEN SHIPS OF THE ESCORT FLOTILLA WERE NOW SAILING ACROSS AN EMPTY SEA. OR WAS IT EMPTY?



SOMETHING HAD INDEED GONE WRONG - FROM THE NAZI POINT OF VIEW. THANKS TO JIM STAFFORD THERE WERE TO BE NO EASY PICKINGS FOR THE U-BOAT PACK. THAT DAY!

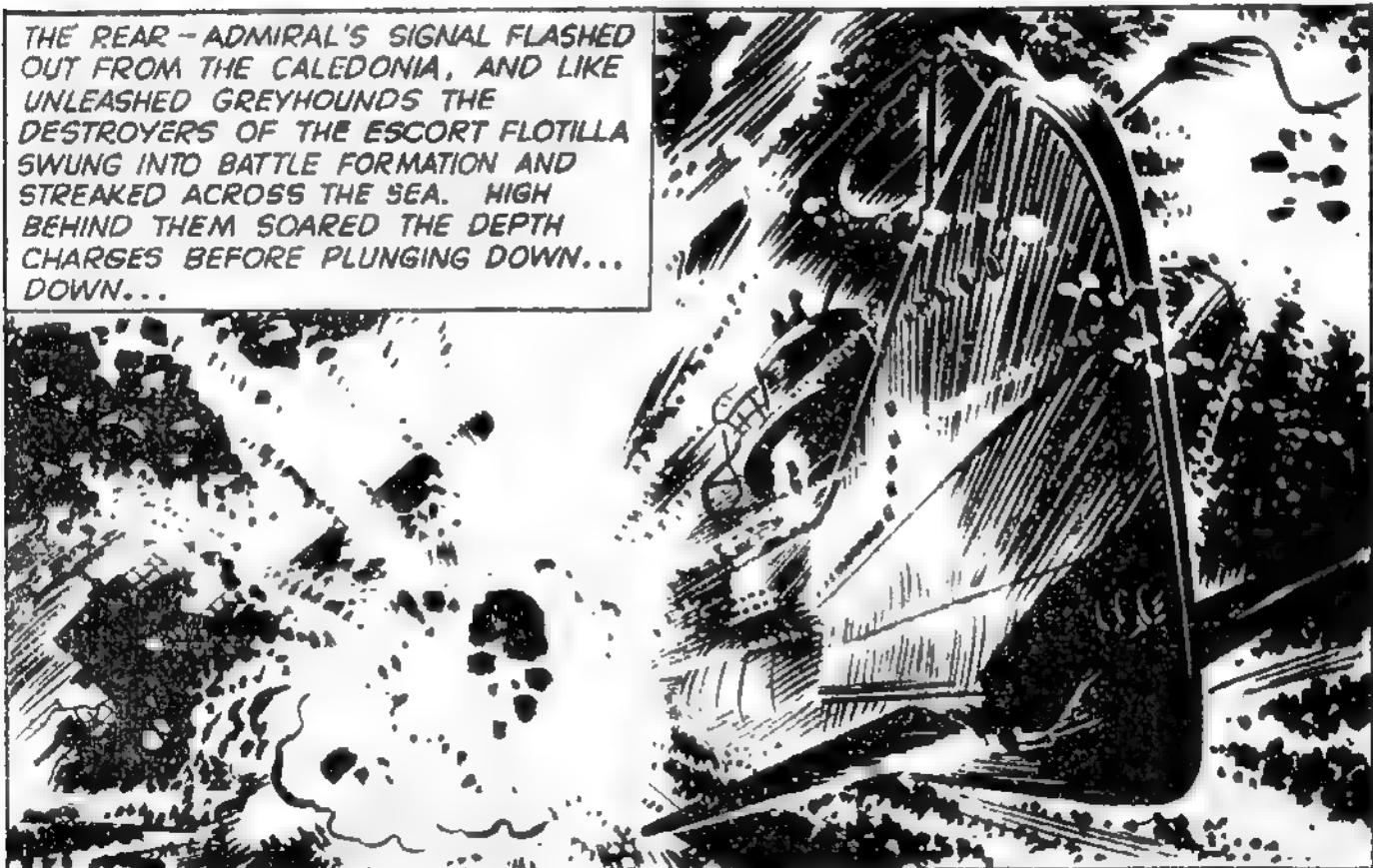
ASDIC BEARING DEAD AHEAD, SIR! VERY, VERY STRONG! U-BOATS - THERE MUST BE A DOZEN OF THEM!

SIGNAL ALL WARSHIPS TO TAKE BATTLE FORMATION! WE'RE DEPTH CHARGING!

AYE AYE, SIR!



THE REAR-ADMIRAL'S SIGNAL FLASHED OUT FROM THE CALEDONIA, AND LIKE UNLEASHED GREYHOUNDS THE DESTROYERS OF THE ESCORT FLOTILLA SWUNG INTO BATTLE FORMATION AND STREAKED ACROSS THE SEA. HIGH BEHIND THEM SOARED THE DEPTH CHARGES BEFORE PLUNGING DOWN... DOWN...



5
Convoy



Convoy



Convoy

ALL OVER AN AREA OF FOUR SQUARE MILES THE SAME SCENE WAS BEING REPEATED. THIS TIME IT WAS THE U-BOATS WHICH DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE!

DESTROYER SCIMITAR REPORTING ANOTHER HIT, SIR. THAT'S TEN U-BOATS SUNK!

THERE'S SOME NAZI SURVIVORS IN THE WATER OVER THERE, CAPTAIN. WE'VE BROKEN SO MANY RULES ON THIS CONVOY WE CAN BREAK ANOTHER ONE. STAND BY TO PICK 'EM UP.



THERE WAS NO DANGER IN STOPPING NOW. THE NAZI U-BOAT PACK HAD BEEN UTTERLY DEFEATED. JIM STAFFORD WAITED AT THE RAILS WITH OTHER OFFICERS OF THE CALEDONIA AS THE SURVIVORS WERE HAULED ABOARD.

SORRY LOOKING LOT, AREN'T THEY, NOBBY?

NOT SO COCKY NOW!

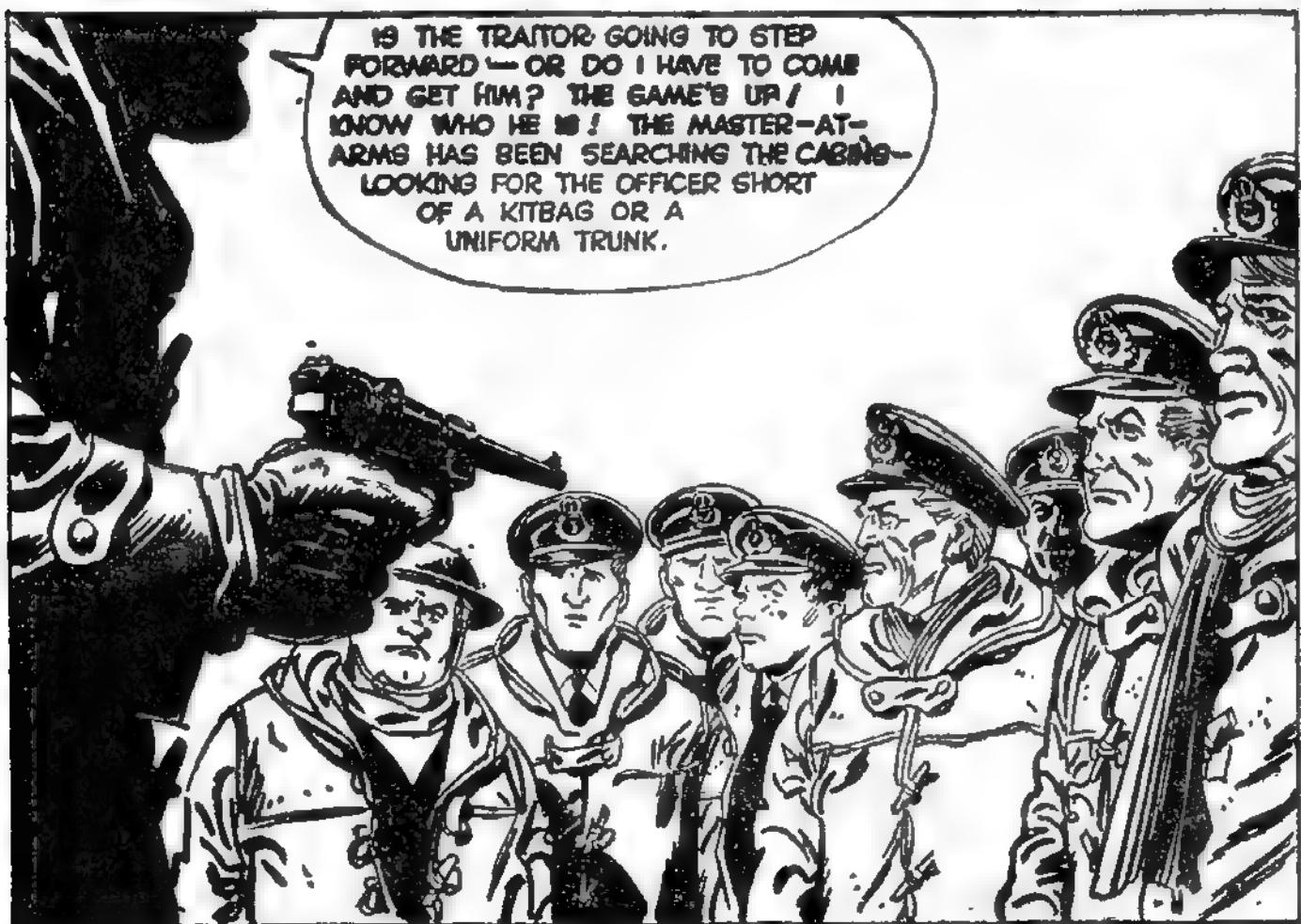


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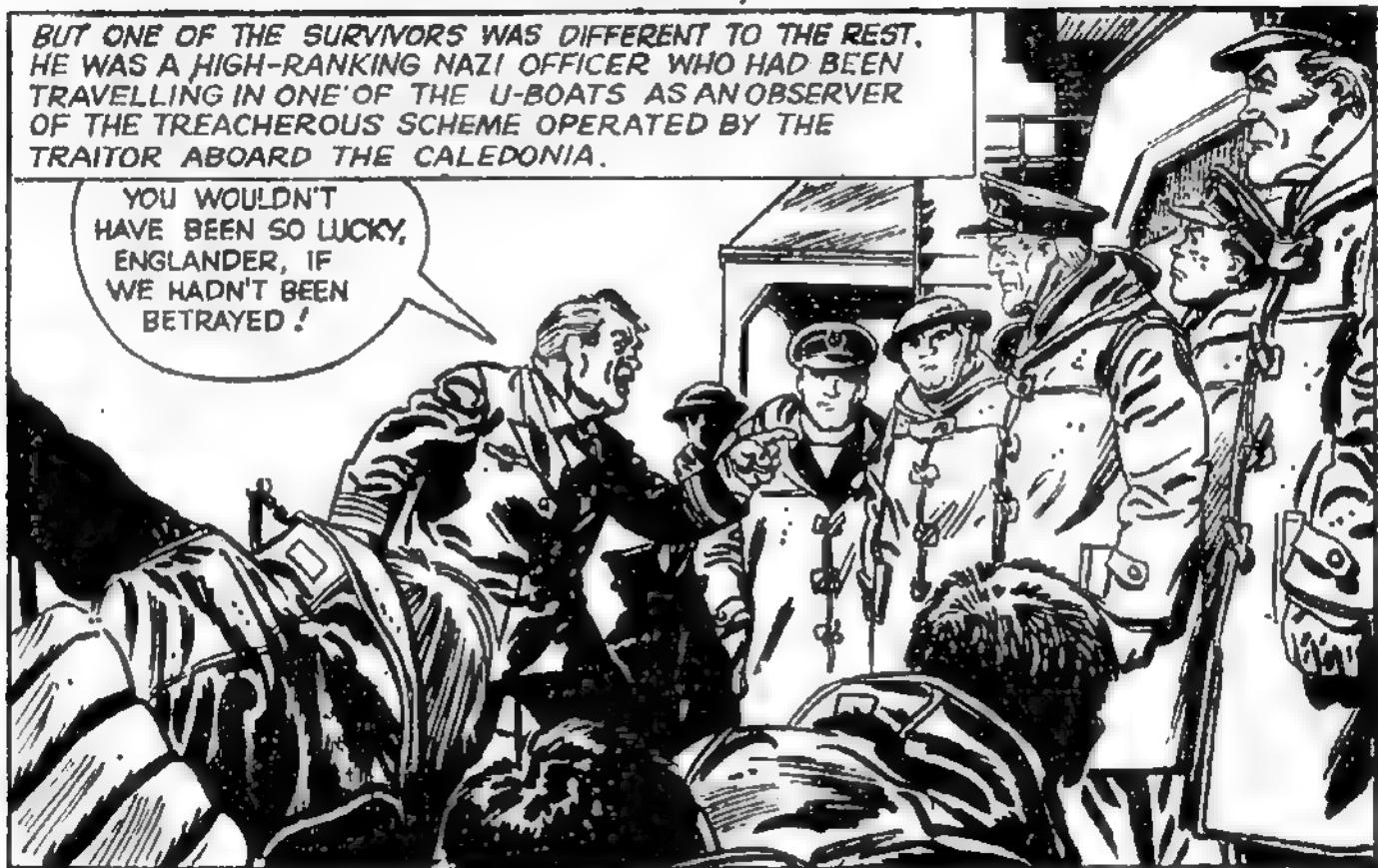
I'LL HAVE THIS !

IS THE TRAITOR GOING TO STEP FORWARD — OR DO I HAVE TO COME AND GET HIM? THE GAME'S UP! I KNOW WHO HE IS! THE MASTER-AT-ARMS HAS BEEN SEARCHING THE CABINS LOOKING FOR THE OFFICER SHORT OF A KITBAG OR A UNIFORM TRUNK.



BUT ONE OF THE SURVIVORS WAS DIFFERENT TO THE REST. HE WAS A HIGH-RANKING NAZI OFFICER WHO HAD BEEN TRAVELLING IN ONE OF THE U-BOATS AS AN OBSERVER OF THE TREACHEROUS SCHEME OPERATED BY THE TRAITOR ABOARD THE CALEDONIA.

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO LUCKY, ENGLANDER, IF WE HADN'T BEEN BETRAYED !



WE WERE LED INTO A TRAP SET BY THE MAN WE TRUSTED ! BUT I'LL EVEN THE SCORE WITH HIM ! I'LL —

AS IF BY MAGIC, A GUN HAD APPEARED IN THE NAZI'S HAND. A GUN WHICH SWEEPED ROUND THE RING OF ENCIRCLING BRITISH OFFICERS TO FIND ITS TARGET. JIM STAFFORD LEAPED INTO ACTION.

AAARGH !

DO MY JOB ? NOT ON YOUR LIFE !



Convoy

SLOWLY, UNDER THE SECRET AGENT'S THREATENING GAZE, AN OFFICER STEPPED FORWARD. AT FIRST REAR-ADmirAL WILSON WAS STRUCK WITH SHOCK!

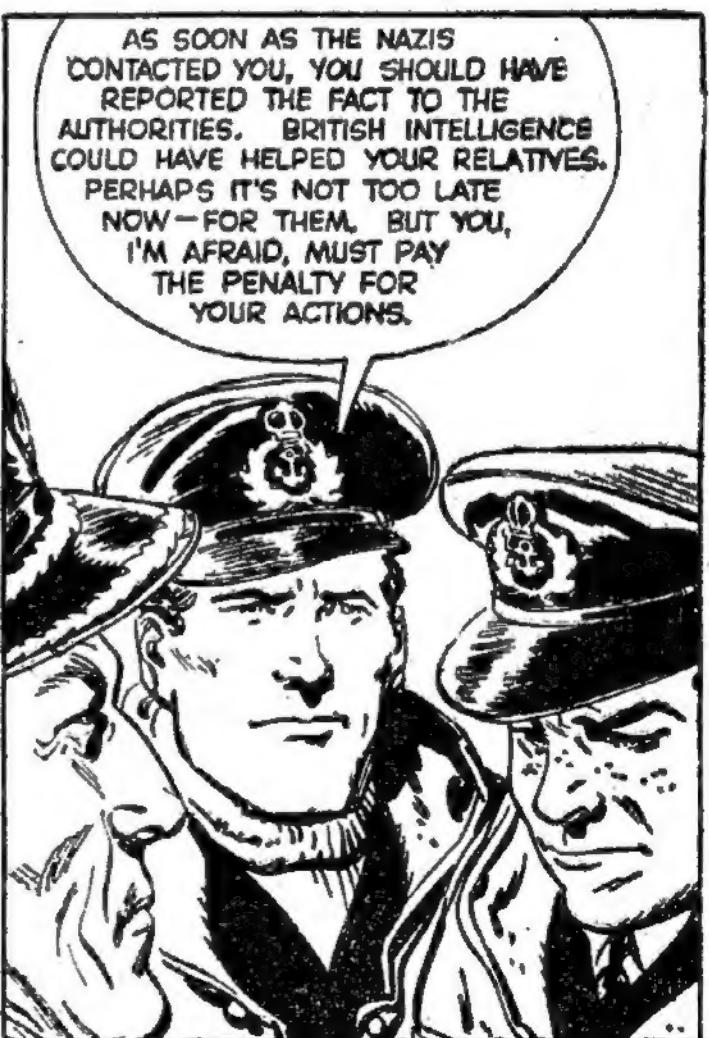


THE GUNNERY OFFICER'S SHOULDERS SAGGED...

YES, ME, SIR. OH, I DIDN'T DO IT FOR MONEY... BUT BECAUSE THE NAZIS MADE ME DO IT. I HAVE RELATIVES IN OCCUPIED FRANCE, YOU SEE. THE NAZIS CONTACTED ME AND TOLD ME I HAD TO HELP THEM OR MY RELATIVES WOULD SUFFER... OH, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THEM NOW!



AS SOON AS THE NAZIS CONTACTED YOU, YOU SHOULD HAVE REPORTED THE FACT TO THE AUTHORITIES. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE COULD HAVE HELPED YOUR RELATIVES. PERHAPS IT'S NOT TOO LATE NOW - FOR THEM. BUT YOU, I'M AFRAID, MUST PAY THE PENALTY FOR YOUR ACTIONS.





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